

REMARK

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicants will have canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, pending claims 1-39 and will have submitted new claims 40 through 45 for consideration by the Examiner in the present application. Additionally, Applicants will have elected the species identified by the Examiner as embodiment 2 in response to the Examiner's election of species requirement dated December 14, 2007.

The cancellation of the previously pending claims and the submission of new claims for examination in the present application is expressly not made in view of any prior art. Accordingly, no prosecution history estoppel should attach to these changes.

In the outstanding Official Action, the Examiner indicated that the present application contains claims directed to a number of patently distinct species of the claimed invention. The Examiner enumerated 20 different embodiments and indicated that various figures describe these embodiments. The Examiner additionally asserted that the species are "independent or distinct" and gave reasons for such assertion.

Accordingly, the Examiner required Applicants to elect a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits to which all the claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable. The Examiner additionally indicated that currently no claims are generic.

In response, Applicants have elected, by the present response, the species identified by the Examiner as embodiment 2 and corresponding figure 6, as identified by the Examiner.

In supporting the basis for his election the species requirement, the Examiner gave reasons why the species are independent or distinct. However, at least some of features discussed by the Examiner are not mutually exclusive. At least for this reason the Examiner's requirement is submitted to be inappropriate. However, since by the present response Applicants have canceled all of the previously pending claims, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's election of species requirement has, at least for this reason, been rendered moot.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an action on the merits directed to claims 40 through 45 now pending in the present application. Each of these claims is directed to the elected species.

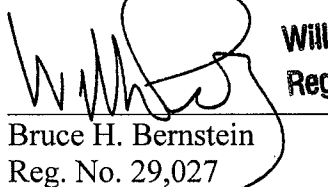
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

By the present response, Applicants have elected one of the species identified by the Examiner without acquiescing in the propriety of the Examiner's requirement. Applicants have additionally submitted a new set of claims that is directed to the elected species. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request an examination on the merits of all of the claims pending in the present application together with an indication of the allowability thereof, in due course. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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